

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 IO-14 ISO-00 EB-11 COA-02 COME-00 CIEP-03

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0104

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCLANT

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB PINT PO

SUBJ: SCAB SOVIET SARDINES HELP BREAK FISHERMEN'S STRIKE

REF: LISBON 2068 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ARRIVAL OF 3400 TONS OF SOVIET SARDINES IN OPORTO HAS CONTRIBUTED TO ENDING STRIKE BY PORTUGUESE SARDINE FISHERMEN. PCP MAINTAINED DUAL POLICY OF GIVING RHETORICAL SUPPORT TO WORKERS' CAUSE WHILE SABOTAGING MEASURES WHICH MIGHT HAVE REINFORCED THE STRIKE. FAR LEFT GROUPS HAVE DENOUNCED PCP AND ATTEMPTED TO RALLY STRIKERS. END SUMMARY.

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1. PORTUGUESE FISHING INDUSTRY HAS BEEN IN STATE OF DECLINE FOR SEVERAL YEARS. PORTUGUESE FISHING VESSELS HAVE NOT BEEN MODERNIZED AND CONSEQUENTLY CANNOT TRAVEL TOO FAR OUT TO SEA NOR DO THEY HAVE REGRIGATION EQUIPMENT FOR PRESERVING CATCHES. WITH DISAPPEARANCE OF SARDINES FROM IMMEDIATE VICINITY PORTUGUESE COAST, FISHING INDUSTRY MUST FACE ANNUAL SPRING CRISIS AS CATCH AT THAT SEASON AT LOWEST POINT.

2. APPROXIMATELY 1200 SARDINE FISHERMEN FROM MATOSINHOS (NEAR OPORTO) WENT ON STRIKE JUNE 15. THEIR REPORTED DEMANDS INCLUDED FIXED SALARY OF 4000 ESCUDOS (US \$160) INSTEAD OF CURRENT SYSTEM OF PAYMENT FOR ACTUAL CATCH. CERTAIN OTHER FISHERMEN AND WORKERS IN ALLIED SECTORS (BOAT OPERATORS, SHELLFISH GATHERERS) ALSO WENT ON STRIKE.

3. CANNERS REFUSED TO YIELD TO FISHERMEN'S DEMANDS AND INSTEAD BEGAN LOOKING AROUND FOR ALTERNATE SOURCES OF SUPPLY. CANNERS FOUND SUCH A SOURCE IN SOVIET FISHING VESSEL NACKICHEVAN, WHICH HAS REFRIGERATION EQUIPMENT AND IS ABLE TO FREEZE FISH CAUGHT IN AREA BETWEEN AZORES AND CANARY ISLANDS. CANNERS DELEGATION TRAVELED TO SWEDEN WHERE BOAT WAS, CONCLUDED DEAL, AND RETURNED TO PORTUGAL WITH KNOWLEDGE THAT SUPPLY FOR IMMEDIATE FUTURE FULLY ASSURED. NACKICHEVAN ARRIVED IN OPORTO JULY 16 WITH 3400 TONS OF FROZEN SARDINES. AN AVERAGE OF 400 TONS UNLOADED DAILY THEREAFTER.

4. WHILE SECONDARY STRIKERS (ALL THOSE OTHER THAN SARDINE FISHERMEN THEMSELVES) RETURNED TO WORK WITHIN FEW DAYS OF NACKICHEVAN'S ARRIVAL, THE PRINCIPAL STRIKE INITIALLY REMAINED UNBROKEN. ON JULY 25, HOWEVER, FISHERMEN RETURNED TO WORK, HAVING ACCEPTED COMPROMISE PROPOSAL THAT FELL SHORT OF THEIR DEMANDS. CONDITIONS OF SETTLEMENT WERE STIPULATED AS BEING TEMPORARY, SINCE OWNERS OF FISHING VESSELS ALLEGEDLY ARE UNABLE TO PAY CURRENT PRICE OF DIESEL FUEL AND HAVE PETITIONED GOVERNMENT FOR A 50 PERCENT PRICE REDUCTION.

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5. IN LINE WITH ITS PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED POLICY (REFTEL) PCP DID EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO DISSUADE FISHERMEN FROM GOING ON STRIKE. PCP PRAISED FISHERMEN, ACKNOWLEDGED JUSTICE OF THEIR CAUSE, RECALLED PCP'S HISTORY OF STANDING UP FOR PORTUGUESE WORKERS, BUT SAID STRIKE SHOULD BE USED ONLY AS ULTIMATE WEAPON. ACCORDING TO PCP, STRIKE WOULD NOT BENEFIT FISHERMEN BUT WOULD ONLY SERVE INTERESTS OF CAPITALIST EXPLOITERS (CANNING

INDUSTRY) AND THOSE WISHING TO PROVOKE DISORDER AND ECONOMIC CHAOS IN ORDER TO UNDERMINE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT. ONCE STRIKE HAD BEGUN PCP MOVED FROM RHETORIC TO ACTION, BLOCKING PROJECTED EFFORTS TO PROMOTE BOYCOTT OF RUSSIAN SARDINES OR, FAILING THAT, REFUSAL OF CANNERY EMPLOYEES TO ACCEPT THEM. AS A RESULT OF PCP'S EFFORTS, BOYCOTT FAILED TO MATERIALIZE AND STEVEDORES WHO HAD THREATENED NOT TO UNLOAD VESSEL WORKED ROUTINELY. PCP MAINTAINED DISCREET PUBLIC SILENCE ABOUT ARRIVAL OF RUSSIAN SARDINES, LEAVING "CREDIT" FOR THIS ACCOMPLISHMENT TO CANNING INDUSTRY.

6. STRIKERS ONLY SUPPORT CAME, AS HAS BEEN THE CASE IN OTHER INSTANCES OF LABOR UNREST, FROM FAR-LEFT GROUPS, MRPP IN PARTICULAR WAS ACTIVE IN ATTEMPTING TO BUTTRESS STRIKERS' MORALE, EVEN TO POINT OF RAISING MONEY TO CONTRIBUTE TO STRIKE FUND. AT LEAST THREE FAR LEFT WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS (LUTA POPULAR, A VOZ DO TRABALHADOR, AND A VERDADE) HAVE REPORTED ON STRIKE AND ON PERFDY OF BOTH PCP AND SOVIET "SOCIALIST IMPERIALISTS". USSR CHARACTERIZED AS "SOCIALIST IN ITS WORDS BUT AN ENEMY OF THE WORKERS OF THE WORLD AND IMPERIALIST IN ITS ACTS".

7. PORTUGUESE PRESS HAS CHARACTERISTICALLY TREATED STRIKE IN SUPERFICIAL MANNER, REPORTING DEVELOPMENTS AS THEY OCCURRED BUT PROVIDING LITTLE IF ANY INTERPRETATION. WHAT INTERPRETATION THERE HAS BEEN GENERALLY HAS FOLLOWED PCP'S LINE OF PLACING EMPHASIS ON PLIGHT OF EMPLOYEES IN CANNING INDUSTRY AS OPPOSED TO FISHERMEN'S PLIGHT.

8. COMMENT: THE QUESTIONS POSED BY THIS STRIKE, AS BY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OTHERS RECENTLY, ARE: A) HOW LONG CAN PCP CONTINUE TO GET AWAY WITH POLICY WHICH SUPPORTS WORKER INTERESTS IN WORDS BUT BETRAYS THEM IN DEEDS? B) HOW LONG WILL INCIDENTS OF THIS SORT REMAIN ISOLATED, WITH PORTUGUESE WORKERS IN GENERAL UNAFFECTED? C) TO WHAT EXTENT WILL FAR LEFT'S EFFORTS IN BEHALF OF STRIKERS RESULT IN CREATION OF DIALOGUE OR STRONGER LINKS BETWEEN STRIKERS AND POLITICAL EXTREMISTS? FOR THE MOMENT, AT LEAST, IT APPEARS THAT FAR LEFT REMAINS ISOLATED FROM PORTUGUESE BODY POLITIC AND PCP CAN CONTINUE TO PURSUE ITS POLICY OF "RESPECTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY" WITHOUT SERIOUS CHALLENGE.
SCOTT

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